



## **NEWS FROM NOAA**

**NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

---

Contact: Shelley Dawicki  
508-495-2378  
[shelley.dawicki@noaa.gov](mailto:shelley.dawicki@noaa.gov)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
August 25, 2008

### **Local High School Student Experiences Marine Science Firsthand at Woods Hole Science Aquarium in Massachusetts**

They came from diverse educational and family backgrounds and from states across the nation. For Danielle Spencer of East Oakland, Calif., one of the 11 high school and college students who spent the summer working or volunteering at the Woods Hole Science Aquarium (WHSA) on Cape Cod, Mass., it has been a summer to remember.

Spencer, a junior at Oakland Emiliano Zapata Street Academy, learned about the Woods Hole program from the American Indian Child Resource Center and applied, encouraged by a recent lecture in oceanography she had attended at a nearby college.

“This experience has given me many ideas about what I could do with a degree in marine biology,” she said of the program. “I have a much better idea what is involved. I really liked being outside on collecting trips and visiting other facilities that care for and train animals. It was much better than I expected, and it was fun!”

Feeding fish, training two harbor seals, cleaning tanks, leading shore-side collecting trips for the public, and helping children and adults learn about marine animals at the touch tanks were all part of her daily routine. She also attended career lectures, visited other nearby marine science facilities, and enjoyed meeting and working with the other students.

Although she lives in a city and had not been involved in any marine science programs before, she was eager to try something new. Born and raised in East Oakland, Spencer says she has been interested in marine biology since she was 12, when she spent the summer with an aunt who teaches Native American studies in Hawaii.

The WHSA, the nation's oldest public research display aquarium, offers two summer programs for high school students who have completed grade 10 or higher, a five-week internship and a two-week career seminar in late July. Both programs are run by the WHSA staff, and are projects of NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center, which operates the Aquarium, and the neighboring private, non-profit Marine Biological Laboratory.

Spencer participated in the two-week Careers in Marine Science Seminar July 21 to August 1, along with four other high school students from Utah, New York and Massachusetts. Several seminar students, including Spencer, stayed on as interns for an

additional 1-2 weeks to help with animal husbandry and to serve as junior naturalists on collecting walks.

As a career seminar student Spencer received training in marine animal husbandry and basic aquarist chores, heard presentations from scientists working in a variety of marine fields, went on collecting trips, visited other Woods Hole science institutions, and went on field trips to New Bedford and Nantucket.

The seminar program is designed to give students an idea of what people working in Woods Hole do and how different areas of science contribute to the larger effort to understand the marine world and to manage marine resources wisely.

The annual program also provides students with the opportunity to work with a professional staff caring for a collection of about 140 species of fish and invertebrates common to the continental shelf from Maine to North Carolina, two harbor seals named LuSeal and Bumper, and sometimes sea turtles held for rehabilitation and eventual release.

The group was kept busy during the day, and enjoyed many activities together at night and on weekends, from playing soccer and seeing the latest Batman film at the local theater to a bonfire on the beach. They even spent a “Night at the Aquarium,” eating pizza, playing games and sleeping on the conference room floor. “I got to see bioluminescence for the first time when we went swimming one night. It was cool.”

Once back at the Oakland Emiliano Zapata Street Academy in a few weeks, Spencer will resume classes and involvement in Oakland’s Native American community. Of Navajo and Laguna Pueblo heritage, Spencer spends time after school at the American Indian Resource Center tutoring younger students, sharing her heritage and what she has learned, and helping them deal with problems facing Native American youth.

Her favorite experience at the WHSA this summer: “everything. I learned hands-on what it is like to care for sea animals, to begin to understand the way they live and the importance of maintaining where they live. It was exactly what I had hoped it would be.”

And the future? Spencer says she plans to pursue a career in marine science at the University of Hawaii, and one day create a sanctuary for endangered or injured sea animals.

###